

September 6th, 2019

Honorable Judge Sharon L. Gleason
U.S. District Court
222 W. 7th Avenue, Rm 229
Anchorage, AK 99513

Lee John Screnock


Dear Judge Gleason,

My name is Lee John Screnock. I was the owner of Arctic Treasures Trading Post on 328 W. 4th Avenue in Anchorage for seventeen years. before I relinquished the business to an artist from Point Hope, Alaska last year, on June 15th.

During my years running this business, I have made several mistakes which tainted the artist community, especially to the people of Point Hope. I misrepresented them by using the name "Savuk" (which means worker). This name was given to me by a master carver from Point Hope while he was carving at Arctic Treasures. I also sold a polar bear skull to a customer, not knowing at the time it was illegal to sell even if it had a proper tag. My judgment was lacking at the time because I did not research the law, I only listened to local Native artists. I later learned that the polar bear skull needed to have artwork on it to be sold legally. I take full responsibility in regards to my mistakes. I am very ashamed of my actions and I recognize the mistakes I have made.

For the last seventeen years, I alone have been an active advocate of promoting Alaskan Arts by helping Native artists. Ever since I changed my business from a pawn shop to an art store, one of my goals was helping the artists that were homeless and the ones that had just gotten out of prison. Many of the artists that worked at my shop were able to stabilize their lives. I shared my financial resources to provide tools for the carvers, fed them a meal a day by personally cooking for them, and help them find places to live (via finding apartments and paying for them). During this time I had fallen very ill and weak, so I prayed to the Lord to send me the right candidate to continue this program I set up. This is when Mr. Leon Kinneveauk came into my shop, looking for a space to work (carve). I shared my vision with him and how we could continue the program I started seventeen years ago. Mr. Kinneveauk had his own mistakes in the past, however through his unfortunate events and experience, he was well prepared for a new life by understanding that each of us has a role to live, a meaningful life and perhaps it can give us (by serving the people) a chance at redemption of our past mistakes. He agreed with this, so I forfeited all my opportunity and livelihood to Mr. Kinneveauk, not only so that the program could continue but also be under clearer guidelines and leadership.

I have not engaged in any activities concerning art (carving) or business since I relinquished my business to Mr. Kinneveauk on June 15th, 2018. He is definitely continuing the programs I started and is doing an even better job than I have, with the resources and information from the Native community.

I have already punished myself and asked for forgiveness from the Point Hope community (artists) and the court by not participating in artist activities in the community all together since June 15th, 2018. I will accept the court's punishment and will repay my debt to the Point Hope artists and the community of Anchorage. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,